

## Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-11

OES-03 ERDA-05 ACDA-05 NRC-05 SAI-01 TRSE-00 /089 W

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R 281837Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7283

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

USAFE

CINCUSAREUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 02719

MILITARY ADDEES ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MNUC, MPOL, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND STRATEGY

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1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SENIOR GOF DEFENSE OFFICIAL SAYS

THAT FRENCH STRATEGY REMAINS UNCHANGED WITH REGARD TO REJECTION OF "SUSTAINED CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE" FOR CENTRAL EUROPE. END SUMMARY.

2. AT PUBLIC CEREMONY JANUARY 24, FRENCH INSTALLED FIRST ONE MEGATON THERMONUCLEAR WARHEAD (M-20) IN SSBN. NEW WARHEAD WILL GRADUALLY REPLACE THE ONE-HALF MEGATON FISSION WARHEAD (M-2) ALREADY DEPLOYED AND WILL HAVE THE SAME RANGE (ABOUT 3,000 KILOMETERS) AS ITS PREDECESSOR. WE SUSPECT THAT THE SSBN WHICH RECEIVED THIS FIRST NEW MISSILE (THE "REDOUBTABLE") WILL BE FULLY EQUIPPED WITH M-20 WARHEADS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, PERHAPS EVEN BEFORE ITS NEXT REGULAR DEPLOYMENT.

3. IN RECENT DISCUSSION WITH DCM, DELPECH (FRENCH MINISTERIAL DELEGATE IN CHARGE OF ARMAMENTS) POINTED TO M-20 DEPLOYMENT AS INDICATION OF GOF'S DETERMINATION TO MOVE AHEAD WITH MODERNIZATION OF FRENCH STRATEGIC FORCES. HE SAID FRANCE WAS IMPROVING THE SURVIVABILITY OF ITS NUCLEAR WARHEADS THROUGH HARDENING TECHNIQUES AND PENETRATION AIDS. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE UNDERLINED THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN FRENCH STRATEGY: THE NUCLEAR DETERRENT FORCE REMAINS THE BACKBONE OF FRENCH STRATEGY UNDER GISCARD, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO REPEAT NO SHIFT UNDER GISCARD TOWARD FRENCH ACCEPTANCE OF NATO'S STRATEGY OF "FLEXIBLE RESPONSE" AS DESCRIBED IN MC14/3. WHEN DCM NOTED THAT GISCARD DID SEEM TO BE EMPHASIZING CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONVENTIONAL FORCE POSTURE OF FRENCH FORCES (E.G., IMPROVED MOBILITY AND COMMAND AND CONTROL), DELPECH REPLIED THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE VIEWED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION CONFRONTING FRANCE OUTSIDE OF CENTRAL EUROPE, PARTICULARLY ALONG FRANCE'S "SOUTH-EASTERN FRONTIER" (I.E., ITALY) AND ITS "SOUTHWESTERN FRONTIER" (I.E., SPAIN). DELPECH CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT CONCEPT OF SUSTAINED CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE IN CENTRAL EUROPE WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE FRENCH. IT HELD HIGH PROBABILITY OF PRODUCING LEVELS OF DESTRUCTION TO

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CENTRAL EUROPE, POSSIBLY INCLUDING FRANCE, THAT WOULD BE LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM RESULTS OF A NUCLEAR EXCHANGE.

4. COMMENT: DELPECH IS ONE OF SENIOR GOF OFFICIALS DIRECTLY MANAGING GOF MILITARY NUCLEAR PROGRAMS. WE FIND HIS COMMENTS AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF CURRENT FRENCH STRATEGY. IN PARTICULAR, WE SEE NO SIGN THAT FRANCE UNDER GISCARD HAS MOVED AWAY FROM ASSIGNING

PRIMARY IMPORTANCE TO ITS NUCLEAR FORCES IN OVERALL  
DEFENSE STRATEGY. MOREOVER, DELPECH'S COMMENT ON THE  
POTENTIAL THREAT FROM THE SOUTH TO FRANCE'S SECURITY  
ECHOS A CONSISTENT LINE THAT WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FOR  
SOME TIME FROM SENIOR GOF OFFICIALS INCLUDING GISCARD  
HIMSELF. THE RESTRUCTURING OF FRENCH FORCES WHICH IS  
NOW IN PROGRESS AND WILL LEAD TO THE CREATION OF SEVERAL  
ADDITIONAL ARMY DIVISIONS IN THE FRENCH FORCE STRUCTURE  
PROBABLY REFLECTS GROWING FRENCH CONCERN ABOUT POTENTIAL  
-- ALTHOUGH AMBIGUOUS -- THREATS WITHIN THE MEDITERRA-  
NEAN BASIN TO FRENCH INTERESTS. IT MAY, OF COURSE, ALSO  
HAVE COLLATERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FRENCH MILITARY CAPABIL-  
ITIES IN CONTEXT OF NATO/WARSAW PACT CONFLICT.  
GAMMON

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